

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1           1.       A method of consolidating multiple models, wherein each model  
2 comprises only rules that define a non-cyclic chain of dependencies among families  
3 and features of families and include at least one rule having a constraint that  
4 references a non-ancestral family to the constraint, the method comprising:  
5           combining the models into a single, consolidated model that maintains the  
6           non-cyclic chain of dependencies among families and features of  
7           families.

1           2.       The method of claim 1 further comprising:  
2 detecting any inconsistencies between rules included in the consolidated  
3           model; and  
4 attempting to resolve any detected inconsistencies.

1           3.       A system for consolidating multiple models, wherein each model  
2 comprises only rules that define a non-cyclic chain of dependencies among families  
3 and features of families and include at least one rule having a constraint that  
4 references a non-ancestral family to the constraint, the system comprising:  
5           a model consolidation module to combine the models into a single,  
6           consolidated model that maintains the non-cyclic chain of  
7           dependencies among families and features of families.

1           4.       A computer program product having instructions encoded therein to  
2 consolidate multiple models, wherein each model comprises only rules that define a  
3 non-cyclic chain of dependencies among families and features of families and include  
4 at least one rule having a constraint that references a non-ancestral family to the  
5 constraint, the instructions comprising code to:  
6           combine the models into a single, consolidated model that maintains the non-  
7           cyclic chain of dependencies among families and features of families.